

# WATER QUALITY

## ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

### GULF OF THE FARALLONES NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

#### ISSUE STATEMENT

Water quality within Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) is generally good due to the rural nature of the coastline and strong currents of the open ocean. Nevertheless, depending on coastal currents, the 8 million people living in the Bay Area and the discharge into the San Francisco Bay Estuary (including agricultural wastes from the Central Valley and residual sediments and metals from historic mining), can impact the sanctuary.

#### OUR GOAL

To protect and enhance water quality in the estuarine, nearshore, and offshore environments of the sanctaury.



Photo: GFNMS

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The coastal waters of the sanctuary, particularly the estuarine habitats of Bolinas Lagoon, Tomales Bay, Estero Americano, and Estero de San Antonio, are vulnerable to land-based, nonpoint source pollution. Sources of concern include runoff, agriculture, marinas and boating activities, past mining, and aging and undersized septic systems. Other potential threats to water quality include activities such as diversion of fresh water, spills, dumping, land use changes, and pollutants such as floating debris (e.g. plastics), pathogens, emerging pollutants (e.g. endocrine disrupters), and residual materials such as radioactive waste and chemical contaminants including bioaccumulative legacy pollutants (e.g. DDT, PCBs).

The sanctuary's objective is to develop a regionally based, cooperative water quality protection plan to address point and non-point source water quality impacts. The sanctuary will take a watershed/ecosystem approach, to address the wide range of water quality threats from chronic land-based runoff to catastrophic offshore events.

---

*For more information on Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary please visit our website <http://farallones.noaa.gov>*

# THE JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW (JMPR)

Water Quality is one of the action plans in the GFNMS Draft Management Plan (DMP). The DMP includes nine action plans that, once finalized, will guide sanctuary management for the next five years. The plan is a revision of the original management plan, developed when the sanctuary was designated in 1981, and is focused on how best to understand and protect the sanctuary's resources. The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) is updating the management plans for Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay national marine sanctuaries in what is known as the Joint Management Plan Review.



## GULF OF THE FARALLONES NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Designated in 1981, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary spans 1,279-square-miles (966 square nautical miles) just north and west of San Francisco Bay, and protects open ocean, near-shore tidal flats, rocky intertidal areas, wetlands, subtidal reefs, and coastal beaches within its boundaries.

Food-rich sanctuary waters teem with life: fish, invertebrates, seabirds and marine mammals thrive here. The sanctuary contains thirty-six marine mammal species, as well as twenty-six federally listed endangered or threatened species. White sharks and endangered blue and humpback whales migrate here seasonally to feed, and the Farallon Islands host the largest concentration of breeding seabirds in the contiguous United States.



## ACTION PLAN

The sanctuary's Water Quality Action Plan was developed jointly with a variety of stakeholders and partners and includes, but is not limited to, the following components:

- Develop an umbrella program to coordinate partnerships to implement a comprehensive and integrated water quality monitoring program.
- Address sources of anthropogenic pathogens and pollutants on estuarine and nearshore environments from recreational and commercial boating activities and marinas.
- Coordinate with other agencies to address land-based discharges into the estuarine and nearshore areas of the sanctuary including Areas of Special Biological Significance and Critical Coastal Areas.
- Evaluate Areas of Special Biological Significance and making a determination whether to implement a vessel discharge prohibition within these areas of concern.
- Ensure the continuation of the long-term data collection efforts under the Mussel Watch program.
- Develop a standing water quality working group under the Sanctuary Advisory Council.
- Develop the capacity to support a comprehensive and coordinated water quality protection plan.
- Develop an annotated bibliography of water quality research and monitoring programs in and adjacent to the sanctuary to evaluate data and determine the overall water quality of the sanctuary's ecosystem.
- Educate local decision makers on land-based water quality impacts in the sanctuary.

## TO GET INVOLVED

GFNMS welcomes your ideas about important resource management issues in the sanctuary. A Draft Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement are scheduled for release to the public in 2006. Following their release, hearings will be held in several locations throughout the region to gather public comment. Written comments will be accepted as well. To find out about public hearings, or how to submit written comments, please visit our website at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/jointplan>.